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260901Z Oct 05

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 004343

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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD - ERIC
BARBORIAK
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: KMT CHAIRMAN MA'S OP-ED ON TAIWAN
RETROCESSION DAY

1. SUMMARY: (U) The lead story in Taiwan dailies October 26 is passage of the National Communications Commission bill in the Legislative Yuan, the reactions from the pan-Green alliance, and the consequences of the passage of the bill.

2. (SBU) Taiwan dailies October 26 covered the issue of the "Taiwan Retrocession Day," i.e. October 25. In contrast to the DPP government's plan to downplay the significance of this day, KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou placed October 25 a full-page op-ed article in the centrist, pro-status quo "China Times" to mark the 60th anniversary of Taiwan's return to China after World War II. Sources at the China Times told AIT Public Affairs that this "op-ed" was in fact a paid placement by the KMT, although nothing in either the print or Internet version betrayed the fact.

3. (U) In the op-ed, Ma accused the governing DPP party of intentionally ignoring the significance of the anniversary. Ma dismissed the long-held assertion by the DPP that the "228 Incident" and KMT's "White Terror" crackdown on pro-Communists intellectuals after the 1947 incident were the driving forces for the Taiwan independence movement. Ma said the government's land reforms in the 1950s prompted some wealthy Taiwanese to seek Taiwan's independence. Citing examples from historical events, Ma criticized Chen's administration for promoting change in Taiwan's official name and urged the DPP to respect the spirit of DPP pioneers that allows rotation of political power in Taiwan - suggesting Ma's strong intention for KMT to regain its rule in Taiwan. President Chen Shui-bian, on the other hand, said Tuesday the retrocession of Taiwan after World War II does not equal the return of Taiwan to China.

4. (U) EDITORIALS AND COMMENTARIES. The pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" editorialized that Ma's October 25 op-ed article serves only the purpose of helping him win the 2008 presidential elections. The pro-independence "Taipei Times" editorialized that China has nothing to do with the Taiwan Retrocession Day, and added that China's commemoration of the day was part of its "United Front" work. End summary.

1. "Ma Ying-jeou Distorted History, Embarrassed the Deceased Wise Men in Order to Get Rid of the Ugly Name of 'Foreign Political Party.' Ma's Efforts are Destined to be in Vain."

The pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" [circulation: 150,000] said in its editorial (10/26) that:

"Ma Ying-jeou asked scholars working for him to write an article, and he used his name to publish that article entitled 'In Remembrance of the 60th Anniversary of the Retrocession of Taiwan: Remember the Paradigms of the Deceased Wise Men, and Rebuild the Spirit of Taiwan' in the 'China Times.' The names of the deceased wise men mentioned in the article are stepping-stones for Ma Ying-jeou to link the KMT to Taiwan. The purpose [underlying the article] aims to not only clear the name of the KMT government as a 'non-native regime,' but also to establish the mainstream position of the KMT in Taiwan society. [Ma hopes that] the article would give the KMT legitimacy for 'mainland Chinese [in Taiwan (read: Ma)]' to take part in the 2008 presidential elections."

2. "An Odd Event Across the Strait"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (10/26):

"China's 'United Front' campaign against Taiwan moved into new territory when Beijing marked Retrocession Day yesterday. For decades, China has ignored this day, but this year Beijing invited members of Taiwan's opposition parties and senior Chinese leaders to take part in three days of festivities.

"When the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) was in power, Retrocession Day was a big event in Taiwan, but after the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) took the presidency, this

changed. The new government's interpretation is that Oct. 25 signifies no more than the end of the Sino-Japanese War, and is not related to Taiwan's sovereignty. For this reason, commemorative activities in Taiwan were much more low key this year.

".In fact, the sovereignty of Taiwan and that of China are completely unrelated. The 1951 San Francisco Treaty states that Japan renounces all right, title and claims to Formosa and the Pescadores. But nowhere does it specify that sovereignty was returned to the Republic of China (R.O.C.), let alone the People's Republic of China. ."

15. (U) COMMENT: Commemoration of Taiwan Retrocession Day in Taiwan was marked by political competition between the pro-independence Pan-Green parties and the pro-unification Pan-Blue parties, reflecting the rising temperature of Taiwan politics in the run up to the December 3 local elections. President Chen Shui-bian took advantage of his meeting with participants in the "U.S.-Japan-Taiwan Strategic Dialogue" conference the same day, Oct 25, to both deny that Taiwan retrocession meant the return of Taiwan to China and to call for closer security cooperation among Japan, the U.S. and Taiwan. END COMMENT

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